

DRAFT MAY 2020

Mahsud Scouts

Frontier Corps

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5/5/2020

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First Two Weeks

I am sitting at Infusion Cell in Balahisar Fort, it is popularly known as Confusion Cell, outside it is pleasant, and being Friday the scouts are preparing for Friday prayers. Next to me the scout is watching the last night recordings of jet aircraft poundings of miscreants hideouts in Tirah Valley not very far from here. The whole area is not visible to operators through the Google Earth thus an aerial reconnaissance of such areas is carried out using C-130 aircraft of air force or King Jet of army aviation. These videos are then scrutinised here and targets selected for air force or artillery. Sounds impressive and it is but it is being done in a relaxed manner with a pair of parrots also sharing the cell apart from four wall mounted screens which are now being used for cable watching.

This cell was incorporated with the help of Americans who brought all this equipment , a huge coloured printer for printing maps, screens to monitor the live video of drone or other aerial information or mission, in short a kind of their own operational room. Now they have gone and work has slowed down but now it has been tuned to own requirement and technical capability.

I came here almost two weeks ago.

21st May 2013. FC Mess Peshawar, 2300 hours.

Electricity has just arrived, it will likely to stay for another two hours before it runs away for an hour and then comes back, this drama will last whole night and it is going on for last five years. It is hot and terrible; not surprisingly the ruling political parties have been washed away in this general elections for this sole reason. One has to think about the millions living in the inner and old city with having no means to buy the generator or any other source to keep the lights working and running the affairs of daily life.

This is my third night here in the mess, I am here to write the history of the Frontier Corps, I came driving in my Mercedes from Islamabad, after spending hours with Jehangir mechanic, all the way my eyes were on the temperature gauge and I did not had a sigh of relief even once. My ordeal can be understood only by those who have old cars and especially those which if break down on highway can neither be pushed and nor be rectified.

All along it was darkness, town and villages giving bleak look although the euphoria of having the first free and fair election in which the Patahns have elected a new political party Tehreek Insaff of Imran Khan into power in the province with Nawaz Shariff in power at centre, [electricity has gone again after just

fifteen minutes] just imagine the state of mind of ordinary person in such situation. It is inhumane, barbaric and unjustifiable in this heat with modern construction forestalling any movement of air.

The very first night which was two nights ago in this mess , I had to open the windows which I believe were closed since years as is obvious from the dust, my room is called Tochi , it si the last room on the top floor with windows on both ends, one lacks fly and other was jammed. One can bear the weather provided if one lives accordingly but unfortunately our lifestyle is all too banking upon the air

Bala Hisar Fort

I am sitting inside it right now rather I am at its top. I came here first time in 1993 with my wife, son who was just few months old and mother in law; not much has changed inside the fort or outside , it is the beauty of the city that it gives such an impression on the other hand quite a work has been done inside the fort with a new mosque and new lines for scouts both made artistically in classical red brick style; it was done by last inspector general of Frontier Corps Major General Nadir Zeb.

My job is to compile the history of Frontier Corps , while going through the history compilation of Tochi Scouts I read quite a lot and as such I can claim to

have a fair amount of knowledge about the area and the corps. I know that in 1951 the efforts were made to have the history of the corps, again in sixties, seventies and then in nineties same efforts were floated which finally resulted in the publishing of book *Frontier Guardian* by Major Muhammad Nawaz. However when I inquired nothing was traceable regarding those efforts or data. On the other hand, the 11 Corps started or initiated a plan to archive the history and similarly army under General Kayani also took keen interest in the archiving and establishing a museum, it is these external factors which resulted in FC having a very sound and good draft of present conflict.. Efforts of Colonel Mamun, Lieutenant Colonel Azhar of education corps are worth mentioning in the compilation of the draft. The input all came from the corps and now I intend putting all of it in a chronological fashion.

There is a museum also here, a unique one in terms of design and quite rich in terms of the artefacts all dealing with FC. A small very small library is also existing next to the museum; other than this it is all bleak.

The weather in these two weeks remained hot very hot but then all of a sudden it rained last week and now it is bearable although the famous dust layer is still hanging around the Peshawar Bowl. Peshawar is a rather strange kind of vale, it is bounded on all sides by

medium level mountains but the bowl it self is very wide and very fertile, the circumference must be in tens of miles. As I see it now towards the northern direction all I can see from this height is a sea of green with attitude almost level, a dust wall obstructs my view but when it is clear as it was yesterday then the mountains can be observed which are approximately thirty –forty miles away. Through these mountains exists passes or more precisely the river flows like River Kabul which runs in a west-east direction and joins with river swat almost ten –fifteen miles north east of Peshawar at Charsadda. The famous Khyber Pass is on the west of city, the pass leading towards the Chitral onwards to the Wakhan is in northern direction and can be detoured via Mardan in the eastern direction also.

This is the natural lake of human habitat, the water pours down from the high mountains of central asia which looks surprising and deceptively close from Bala Hisar and this the magic of Peshawar that one tends to shrink the distance towards north. The crow distance is not much in any case, Chitral is 45 minutes away on a propeller driven aircraft, Kabul is also at asme distance. Kashmir also looks closer; the hard fact is that once you cross River Indus than you are in a different frame of mind.

Balahisar Fort Days

Most mysterious past like many pathan, there is very little written record about it not even in provincial archives. The most solid evidence is a black and white picture of probably first afghan war, surprisingly rare painting is also missing at least in the Frontier Corps at present. The picture shows a mud bricked fort of almost a replica of present , which is brick lined by the British when they took over the Balahisar in 1845. Apparently it was made in present form between 1850-1865; for the reason that no such account is mentioned in Colonel Warburton's account of almost a quarter of century lasting till the end of century.

Peshawar and Balahisar are both interwoven with each other in the quilt of history and both have to be analysed as such. Peshawar deviates against the universal wisdom of having city being evolved on the bank of river ; Lahore & Multan are classic examples , all three have forts and an ancient past. Peshawar thus was never a planned city and nor a trade route; Charsadda which lies almost ten miles north of Peshawar on the banks of River Kabul and river Swat is the more logical old hub of movements between the Indus Valley and higher mountainous civilization.

Balahisar Fort thus emerged as the southern out post of the Charsadda guarding the Khyber Pass, Tirah {present day Khyber Agency}; their were further satellite outpost forts as well. The big question is why

Balahisar is mud bricked in 1840 picture; almost all the forts were bricked lined, look at Attock Fort built by Akbar the Great in 1630 on the banks of river Indus, Rohtas Fort by Sher Shah Suri in 1540 thus the mystery deepens as to why this important fort was not fortified or why Peshawar was not given the importance to have fortification.

Peshawar's rise to present fame starts with the Afghan Wars before that it was just a caravan serai marching towards or down from the mountains through Khyber Pass or more precisely the Afridi Tribe along with Shinwari, Shalmanzi and Mullagori. Mohmand tribe's tarakzai branch owns 14000 acres in four villages around Peshawar. British experience from 1850 onwards at Peshawar was not pleasant mainly due to poor hygienic conditions of the city which chiefly was due to lack of water source. Municipal committees and Deputy Commissioners dug well in the city for drinking water just like we have water purification plants today at different parts of city. Cholera and other epidemics including malaria were common. Theft and robbery were the favourite past time of the vagabond tribesmen. Religious sentiments were high but always within limit only four attempted murders on British officers in twenty years till 1899.

Michni and Nawagai passes are the historical passes through which the Alexander the Great's army

marched down. It should be kept in mind that there were two flanks, one led by Alexander himself which marched down towards Peshawar in a wide northern move through Nawagai pass, the other two Greek generals then led the other prong through the Michni and Khyber Passes.; all marched and followed with water source {River Kabul & Swat} less the Khyber Pass formation which debouches on to the Peshawar. It should be kept in mind that nothing of Alexander's history has survived in its original version and the best considered among academic world is that of Arrian's but it was written after almost 300 years in 70 AD , there fore nothing is authentic other than the dictates of geography.

One of the oldest Buddhist ruins are located here including the Ashoka's pillars in the close vicinity of Peshawar but even in more close proximity of Charsadda, the Takht Bhai ruins. Similarly one such stupa is also on the top of a hillock overlooking the Khyber Pass road connecting Peshawar with Kabul.

Fort is in three layers each higher than the other till gets an elevation of 200 feet , the elevation of Peshawar itself is 1800 feet thus a good observatory is created, one feels secure inside and it is peaceful too a bit isolated. I am now having a fort mentality. My scanning has been constantly towards the north-western quarters because I sit in Infusion Cell which has a glass window panel overlooking the western direction. Sitting

on revolving chair one gets the feeling of being on a ship deck . The horizon is all dusty with visibility upto twenty miles . By evening it further improves and silhouettes of Khuber becomes obvious. On the south of Peshawar are the Afridis of Dara Adam Khel who in a crescent encircle the Peshawar till the centre of Balahisar Fort entrance gate, from there onwards the Mohmand's area starts. Shinwaris and Mulagori are another two tribes who live on the northern edge of Afridis , they thus control the mouth of River Kabul, the left bank is with Mohmand Tribe.

At the gate there is one sentry wearing white helmet who opens the gate but I in the first day had gone through the whole procedure , even now when I go there by rickshaw I had to follow the procedure. It is okay nothing extraordinary about it , but I am sure they can alert others. The outer wall of the fort especially the front face has been given a face lift by Nadir Zeb Major General. The present entrance is ascending and winding with three turns or ghulam Gardesh'. In reality the fort had an old entrance similar to Lahore Fort's entrance but on less grandeur, it is visible today and stands out along the whole front wall; this seems to be the royal entrance and the present entrance is at slightly lower level and used for the troops movement; fort had gates at each layer which was closed down at the night, this procedure is not in vogue as only one main gate is closed . Other

day while coming out of the canteen which is located at the top plateau as well, I noticed a sliding pathway with a gate at the end, the length is not more than hundred feet. Thus other exist from the fort. At present the toilets are constructed on the second layer which are used by the troops. This agte is being used for that purpose. I went down and observe the layer, it is wide enough to have accommodation as well. On the eastern side is the grave or ziaart of a holy man ; it was a graveyard in the past. The civil population or the fort attendant had their accommodation on the second layer. This included soldiers, followers and officials. It provides ample space all along the citadel. The first layer similarly must have been the residential area of followers camp, stables and so on.

Living inside the Balahisar

On my very first day I requested Colonel Mamoon to allot me a living room inside the fort as I wanted to savour the lifestyle of the fort, there are two rooms one is under use of fort security officer and other is a small duty officer bunk thus I have to live inside the mess.

The top plateau is wide enough to hold a divisional headquarters and in old time should have been the royal residence. There is hardly any building of ole time left untouched, all have false ceilings, glass

windows, the toilets are hardly attached with offices at least in old pattern construction. I had a round of the area, first I had to find the tailor to get my clothes stitched and from there I went in search of cobbler and this took me to the remote , neglected and hidden part of the area. Tailor is in the barrack where as the cobbler has a tin roof hut. The field mess kitchen is impressive. And so are the waiters. There are very few visitors during the office time although there is a regular flow of visitors for IGFC. I have met him twice in last two weeks and I am very at ease with him. He likes to talk and listen as well, young and courteous. He have no idea the kind of mental torture I had with the mess and military transport branches. His office is spacious, they have created a kind of garden by having plants outside the main glass wall and then putting a tarpal over it. The staff officer and a a visitor waiting room the old jirga room are part of the office block. Another office block which is a new construction houses full colonels and deputy, all have glass windows and attached toilets.

Jirga room and adjoining infusion cell are new construction, jirga hall is impressive but washrooms stinks, the main mosque and living lines are the centre of attraction, both stylish and elegant in design, mosque now occupies the centre of the courtyard witch is at a lower level along with the vehicles parking area/

There is a one dish lunch everyday which I am not sure whether it is on the house or on officers, in fact FC is so big hearted in this manner and that one often thinks of it in such pattern. Modern mind may call it wastage of resources or accountability or Tax payers money and so on but let it not be forgotten that everything is not related with tax money only , FC captures huge quantity of drugs and other smuggled items which enhances the national exchequer as well. The point to bring home is that when you live in old building like Balahisar Fort than your life pattern and working habits are influenced by historical values.

Peshawar is a scary city more so when you read enough to understand that everyone is not that classic pathan who will protect your life at the peril of his own. We think that as long as one is protecting your life he is good , it is not like here in Peshawar. It is primitive in nature to say, dusty and dirty. I spent three days in Saddar , one day searching for a bag and next for a digital camera.

I came to Peshawar first in 1979 with a school debating team which included myself, Habib Ansari and Ahmed Hayat the present GOC of 40 Division. We had a walk in the Saddar , ate flying saucers which were sandwich in nature and generally admire the city which looked so different from Karachi from we have come. Pen pistols were the favourite item for youngsters and I

was no exception. I had heard about Peshawar in 1972 rather it will not be out of context if I say that from my childhood in Punjab I was warned about these patahans , they kidnap children was the biggest fera inculcated in our minds. Later on in Karachi I came to know that the family which lives on the ground floor, one widow, her son , daughter and many others, her husband was killed by a hired killer who after killing just walk away to Ilaqa Ghair; my biggest fantasy at that time was to see this ilaqa ghair and what all I can manage there where there is no law.

In 1981 I came here twice once I stayed with my parents friend at Ghazi near Tarbeal who took us all along the frontier including Peshawar and Swat, next I came with my uncle and family and again we went to Swat. I had a unusual experience then, I was a teen ager ad I walked towards a spot where patahn families were having picnic and I was warned by a member of that family wearing weapon to buzz off and I did. My aunt was posted here her husband was a colonel in then martial law and they were residing in the MPA hostel. I then ventured into ilaqa ghair on a motorcycle. I had a miraculous survival after I crashed my bike on the road due to over speeding.

In military academy the cadets comes here, I also did but my real stay was here in 1992 when I was posted here in the flying squadron , was newly married and

hooked onto hashish. I saw the city at night , at dawn at all times, I flew over it un countless times, read about it, attended local parties also, had a date with a pathan girl also yet I had no pathan friend in real sense other than Javed who had a weapon and Hashish shop in ilaqa ghair which is next to the Hayatabad. The old Bara or ilaqa ghair was towards the south west of the city and it was half a n hour drive with dusty and pucca shops filled with foreign clothes, cigarettes, cosmetics, electronics were functional. At that time and it lasted well into mid nineties that people from Punjab come here for shopping. The new karkhano market as it is known today was almost non existent in early eighties. After commissioning in 1984 in an air defence regiment at Sargodha, one of our regiment 95 was here at Peshawar which included Capatin Rizwan, captain Javed to name, other regiment 13 Light was at Risalpur thus a ready flow of travelling. My own unit officer and my very close friend Captain Samee Khan was living in Peshaawar thus I became close to it.

There used to be regular bus service between Sargodha and Peshawar via Khushab area. Bus used to leave Peshawar at mid night and reaches Sargodha early in morning, once myself and Samee Khan along with Rizwan travelled on it. Through Samee Khan I came to know that there is prostitution in the city also. Tassadaq had plenty of such stories to narrate, I saw with my own

eyes an officer hooking a girl and then having regular dates. Thus that image of piety was shaken. When I was posted here from Karachi I had long walks on beach with my friends and I highlighted what I am expecting here; I was mentally shaken how to start a married life in Peshawar. My wife who happens to be a air force family spent almost all her life here in Peshawar and Kohat without learning any Pashtu word was working in military hospital as doctor.

I remained here for two years and it was fantastic in all sense. My son was born here and spent couple on months before we were posted to Multan. I was impressed with Peshawar in many ways , first thee was never any fight among males, I saw university boys wearing sherwani and vacating seats for elders, girls beautiful and many tales were narrated about them by the bachelor officers of the squadron. One on the squadron officer was ahvinga rough time with a local girl and in the end the officer was given letter of thanks by the army. I have walked through the city at all odd times, I have watched porn and smoke hashish in the Bilours cinema, Peshawar in short was hub of all evil vices, drugs, weapons, porn, smuggling , fake currency, stolen cars and so on; but there was no fear in the air . There was always a difficulty in finding a transport at odd hours, at night it seems as if the city just shuts up. There used to be regular traffic of foreigners at least till

1979, I saw them wandering on the city streets with pathan shop keepers high on hashish just staring at the white girls although clad in decent hippie wardrobe.

I next visited Peshawar

Mahsud Scouts

My first stop was at Mahsud scouts or the Khyber Agency. Irony is that none is familiar with Mahsud scouts, I have been hearing their name quite often from my friend Brigadier sardar who was pushing me to write the history of them but I was reluctant as in my opinion the corps is not old enough in reality I had very feeble knowledge about them. Living in Balahisar one gets into a routine and I came out of the inertia by opting to visit the closet corps Mahsud scouts. On Friday the vehicle came there was one officer major Imran who happened to be from Air defence keeping long ahir, we went together in the convoy comprising of two vehicles.

Karkhano Market at the edge of settled areas of Frontier capital Peshawar is a classic display and proof of how the tribes have been pacified. The area west of Peshawar after twenty miles is the area of Afridi tribe, this territory then extends for another thirty odd miles

further west and encompasses Durand Line and more importantly the Khyber Pass that allows trans mountain ranges movement or between the Afghanistan and Pakistan. Area west of Peshawar is like a bowl with edge of bowl starting at twenty miles with mountain tentacles. Besai Ridge divides this western extremity into two halves, the area on the north of this half leads to the Khyber Pass through Jamrud however the other half of Besai ridge is known as Bara Valley and is the most commercial in the whole Durand Line or tribal area. In Bara valley lives the six clans out of eight clans of Afridi and even among them the Shalobar, Malik Din Khel are on the edge and as such have more control of the commerce, Kuki Khel controls the Khyber Pass at Landi Kotal .

This disparity of having trade opportunities among the clans can have variable outcomes, the less blessed tribes can resort to theft and robbery or they can be coaxed into joining the government jobs or they can be given lands to open their own markets and this is the way the tribal belt has been interfaced into the settled areas since 1849 when Punjab was annexed and Peshawar already under the Sikh rule and governed by a French Governor attained the position of being the Frontier Town between the British India and Kingdom of Afghanistan. Peshawar then was a city of thieves and diseases apart from gardens. It had acute shortage of

water for drinking other than the administration of Sikhs was well established with forward fort at Jamrud the eastern mouth of Khyber Pass, Hari Singh Nalwa had advanced ten miles further west at Ali Masjid the midpoint of the pass but was defeated and killed in field.

It took us not more than twenty minutes from Peshawar to reach the Fort Salop. The track sneaks out from the rear gate of the frontier corps establishment area at Hayatabad crosses a road and follows a track. There is now a wall surrounding the whole Hayatabad complex extending almost towards the Bara Bazar, it is like Berlin Wall in a sense as there exist two distinct cultures on both side of wall. The western end of the area beyond the wall is the Khyber Agency which has its Bara Tehsil here. On a broad spectrum the main road leading from Peshawar – Torkham-Kabul originates from this point, area on the south of the road is the Baar Tehsil which extends further south. Presently it is the hot bed of miscreant activities and my destination is this valley.

We passed in front of Shakas fort which is a new construction as it dates back to mid eighties and practically road terminates here , ahead is a narrow pass and then road takes a dip and first habitation is contacted which is rather well built, solid house, thick growth of jungle trees none bearing fruit or grand in height but gives over all a green colour to the eyes. Town is like

any normal town in Frontier, none was carrying weapons, children going or coming from school wearing white uniform which is a rare scene as all wear militia colour in school but it is probably a private school. We drove farther and these last few miles before the Fort Salop are the dangerous areas, many blast have taken place here so are ambushes. The track is narrow, dusty and sharp turns , it is rather flat and slightly elevated from the ground, visibility is reduced due to thick growth of bushes. The mental state in such moments is alarming, one expects a blast at any moment, a firing burst coming and hitting the vehicle has all the probability, nothing can be taken for granted. My heart beat accelerates , eyes searching for anything unusual, however i had no weapon with me and therefore all these were just basic instincts. The fort all of a sudden emerges out of nowhere; few shops outside which at some time not long ago were bustling with life now deserted. The sentry opened the gate and we entered inside. There is a sigh of relief which every one takes when ever thy reach back into the safety and comfort of the fort

Mahsud Scouts look after the south western approach towards Peshawar, it is part of Khyber Agency and its headquarters is at Fort Salop approximately twenty miles south west of Peshawar. MS {Mahsud Scouts} were raised on 9th August 1937 at Razmak as a 5th Mahsud Road Construction Battalion. These

battalion were raised in mid thirties in Waziristan mainly to induct the native tribes into military there by creating goodwill by providing jobs. On the other hand certain tribes were not fully trusted to the extent to raise full fledged battalions; Mahsud Battalion was a road construction unit mainly and chiefly task for road construction.

Khajauri Campaign 1930 .

Fort Salop It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations. The palins of Baar Valley are also known as Khajauri Plains, Khajauri means Date palm.

On 23rd April 1930, the British army opened fire on the Red Shirts in Qisa Khwani Bazar, Peshawar. Somehow, a rumour spread that three Afridis were also killed who had gone to Peshawar for receipt of their allowances. Frontier conflicts in majority of the cases are result of rumours and this was no exception.

A meeting of Afridi took place in Bagh Masjid Tirah, on 2nd May 1930 and it was decided to send a lashkar to attack Peshawar. Two to seven thousand armed Afridis got collected in Khajuri Plain. They collected at Spin Kamar, Malakdin Khel and Kambar Khel were the chief movers. They started going towards Peshawar by 30 May in small parties along Bara River.

On 5th June 1930, they contacted British forces on the Western outskirts of Peshawar cantonment, Fighting took place for four days and the lashkar was dispersed. Another Lashkar assembled on 05 August and attacked on 13th August 1930 and fighting with British forces continued for about six days resulting in loss of life and property. The British used artillery to disperse the tribesmen. By 20th August about 250 Afridis including 2 old women even reached Peshawar city. The Supply Depot in Cantonment was also attacked. Sir Edwin Pears, chief commissioner of Peshawar, recommended to the Government of the India that Tirah should be occupied¹.

The Afridis are a famous, large and powerful tribe, they live in the area called Tirah, which is about 900 square miles of hilly country, to their west is the Province of Ningrahar, and to their south lies Kurrum Agency. The Afridis are divided into eight major clans: Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Kamar Khel, Kambar Khel, Kuki Khel, Malikdin Khel, Sipah and Zakha Khel. The major portion of the Afridi tribe lives on east of Durand Line, with the exception of a small portion of the Zakha Khels, who have their villages in Ningrahar Province across the mountain, through which the Durand Line is marked.

¹ Nawaz Major, Frontier Guardian, Frontier Corps publication, 1994.

The Government of India formed a committee on 20th September 1930. In January 1931, the committee decided that occupation of Tirah would be unsound politically. As such, occupation of the Khajuri Plain only, was recommended, On 9th December 1931, final sanction was given. General Coleridge started the occupation operation immediately which lasted till 31st March 1931. Consequently roads were constructed on the Khajuri Plain. Some permanent military posts were also established at Fort Salop and other places. On 3rd October 1931, an agreement between the British and Afridis was signed at Jamrud and the British army action came to an end. Fort Salop was named after the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, the British unit which consolidated the area of Karawal etc. During the operation three Brigade size camps were established at Bara Fort, Karawal and Miri Khel. Commander-in-Chief India, Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, also visited troops at Bara Fort, A medal of North West Frontier Campaign 1930-31 was issued after the occupation of Khajuri plain.

The occupation of Khajuri initiated by British took a permanent shape and continued till to date

History

Mahsud Scouts have a convoluted history; it was raised as 5th Mahsud Road Construction Battalion on 9th August 1937 at Razmak as part of Waziristan Command. It was an army unit having army table of organization and equipment. British had raised four such battalions in the Waziristan from 1935 onwards. These battalions had one thing unique; they were not armed with any weapon rather these were road construction battalions wholly consisted of Mahsud Tribe and commanded by a British officer, 5th Mahsud battalion was raised and commanded by **Major R.S.Jhonson** for a year before the battalion itself underwent transition; it was put under Frontier Corps control from Army in April 1938.

The very first task undertaken by the battalion was the construction of Razmak cantonment extension and hutted accommodation. With this change of command another important feature was a change in name, now it was simply known as the Mahsud Battalion still only armed with shovel and pick. One of the key lesson of Frontier warfare has been to keep an eye on the composition of native tribes in militia; no single tribe to have predominate majority and secondly to maintain a balance between the cis frontier and cross frontier tribes within a militia in Frontier Corps. Mahsud battalion was an exception as it still remained wholly composed of Mahsud. Mahsud battalion after Razmak took part in the construction of Nowshehra Ammunition Depot in 1940-

41 and then took part in the construction of anti tank defence at Thall in 1941-42 which can be seen even today. Oghi –Durband road construction was another major project undertaken by the battalion. It was seldom employed in unity rather field construction companies were spread out within the frontier carrying out construction of roads and buildings especially the camps.

Another battalion 2nd Mahsud Battalion was also raised in 1944 during the dying days of Second World War It was raised at Sararogha in June 1944 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R.E.F.G North thus the old 5th battalion which had become only Mahsud battalion was now known as First mahsud Battalion . It was the good experience of the First mahsud which had in fact laid the foundation of the second battalion. Both shared similar cultural traits and were known as Mizh thus the Mahsud Battalions were known as' Mizh Mahsud ' It is a Pakhtu word meaning 'we'. Mizh has become an expletive with the Mahsud who would always say 'Mizh mahsud, i.e. 'we Mahsud' it conveys unity and cohesion which is an outstanding characteristic of the Mahsud. There are main tribes of Mahsud – Alizai, Shaman Khel and Bahlolzai; collectively all three are known as 'Dre Mahsud' [three Mahsud]. One platoon of Urmars was also part of Mizh Mahsud; Urmars are non

Mahsud but are affiliated to Shaman Khel.² The main tasks were construction of roads, airfields, ammunition depot and other similar works of construction and maintenance.

On independence the battalion was busy in the construction of Balakot road. The heroic deeds of the battalion during the first Kashmir War of 1947-1948 are one of the golden chapters of its history. It was unarmed yet when the opportunity arises of helping the brother Muslims in the Kashmir the Mahsud rushed forward. The battalion was not officially employed in the war rather the scouts were encouraged to take part in the liberation of Kashmir voluntarily. From November 1947 onwards when Gilgit Scouts had carried out the war of liberation in Gilgit and Baltistan which resulted in the war being stretched to the limit in the extreme north , it was then that the battalion was given the task of constructing and improving the existing track leading to Gilgit; Babusar Pass .

Major Mir Badshah Mahsud and Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar Mahsud wrote the very first chapter of Mahsud's bravery under Frontier Corps. Major Badshah was decorated with Fakhr-i-Kashmir, hilal-1-Kashmir and Imtiaz-i-Sanad for his excellent command of

² The Frontier Corps an Introduction, Code No FCP-1, a Frontier Corps publication, 1967. P-166.

Mahsud. Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar was decorated with Sitara-i- Jurat; he is the very first Mahsud to be decorated with such decoration. Words about Major Mir Badshah, there were two officers with same name and both commanded 1st & 2nd Mahsud battalions. One Major Bad Shah MBE is from Baluch regiment who commanded 2nd mahsud from 14th October 1952 – 2nd January 1953 and again from August 1953 – November 1953, the other Major Badshah is from General List and commanded 1st Mahsud from 1951-1959³.

Both the Mizh Mahsud were employed in Titwal Sector, 2nd mahsud Battalion was decorated with Tamgha –i- Difa. After the cease fire these battalions were back to construction of road so vital for the maintenance of troops in forward areas. Mr Liaqat Ali Khan during his visit to the Dir in November 1949 has the distinction of visiting the 2nd Mahsud Battalion; he was presented with Rupees 500 by the battalion as a contribution in Quaid-e- Azam memorial fund. Twelve mile long road that connects Garhi Habibullah to Balakot was completed in 1955; it took three years of hard work by the Mizh Mahsud. Another remarkable feather in the cap is the construction of 17 miles long and arduous road connecting Lowari Top with Mirkani Post took five years and was commissioned in 1960. Lowari Top road was initially constructed by the 1st mahsud Battalion in

³ Frontier Corps an introduction, p-161.

1949 it connects Dir with Chitral. Malakand hydro-electric project was initiated in 1950 and was completed by end 1952 by the 1st mahsud Battalion, similarly Kaghan Valley road was initiated in 1953 later the project was abandoned.

12th September 1960 is a historic day for the Mahsud battalions, on this very day these Mahsud were combatised, mortars and machine guns took the place of pick and shovels. It was the Dir –Bajaur campaign of 1960-1961 which was instrumental in this transition. Mizh Mahsud took active part in the operations. From Dir the 1st Mahsud moved to Kalat on 12th April 1964, a successful Brampta was carried out by the 1st Mahsud on 27th July 1964 in Dansar area which is part of Jhalwan. One Tamgha-i- Basalt and one Imtiaz Sanad was sarkar's award to the 1st Mahsud.

1965 War once again saw Mizh Mahsud on the eastern border, it was only 2nd Mahsud Scouts which was employed on the border and were awarded with one Tamgha-i-Basalat { PA 4821 Capatin Sikander Khan} and one President's Commendation Certificate.⁴ It was on 18th September 1965 when the Mahsud Battlions were formally converted into Mahsud scouts thus 1st Mahsud Battalion became 1st Mahsud Scouts and so forth.

⁴ Frontier Corps an introduction, published 1967, pp156-167.

Fort Salop was the permanent station of 2nd Mahsud Scouts whereas after the Kalat operations the 1st Mahsud was stationed at Shelabagh which is 60 miles from Quetta and 17 miles short of Chaman. The main tribes around the area are Kakars, Achakzais, Ghilzais and Baluchis.

1971 War

In 1971 War, almost 2560 scouts from FC were sent to former East Pakistan, where new wings were raised. 26 scouts each from Mahsud Scouts were part of the contingent. No. 2 Mahsud Scouts was deployed on Western Frontiers, it was not a single entity rather in piecemeal. Some of his scouts were sent to East Pakistan and few were attached with No.2 Mahsud Scouts; collectively they wrote the finest chapter of this fabulous corps. There were fourteen platoons in No.1 Mahsud Scouts, four each of Mahsuds, Afridis, Bhattani and two of Brohis similar was the pattern in the other Mahsud Scouts

Mizh Mahsud were deployed at Mendar in Azad Kashmir, ably led by officers specially Captain Mujeeb Faqir Ullah Khan who embraced shahadat and was decorated with Sitara –i-Jurat so were lance Naik Wali Zar and Sepoy Abdul Haleem Brohi. No less than eighteen mahsud scouts embraced shahadat here.

1974.

1974 is a momentous year in the history of Pakistan when the country was host to the Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. On a lesser level but something of far reaching value was the bifurcation of the frontier Corps into the Frontier corps Baluchistan and frontier Corps NWFP. Thus 1st Mahsud which was already based in Shelabagh was amalgamated into the FC Balochistan and 2nd Mahsud Scouts became part of FC NWFP ; till 1981 the 2nd Mahsud Scouts was known as such but from this year onwards it was simply known as Mahsud Scouts.

In November 1974 the Mizh Mahsud was upgraded from one wing to three wing corps, thus the majority of pathan scouts of First Mahsud Scouts were incorporated in to the Second Mahsud Scout. The class composition was also altered with Afridi and Khattak having six platoons each, Turi having four, Orakzai , Mahsud , Mohmand and Bangash having three each, Mangal, Khalil Mohmand and Shilmani having two each.

Dir Operation 1976

In 1976 Dir operation, the Corps also took part and accomplished the task assigned without suffering any casualty and won the praise of all. In March/April 1976, the Panj Pir issue arose, the anti-Panj Pir faction formed large lashkar and started burning the houses of

Panj Piris in Khajuri plain. The government took serious view of this and directed to prevent the anti-Panj Pir faction from taking law in their hands. Mahsud Scouts came to the aid of political agent and its troops were deployed at Dogra post area to prevent the Afridis lashkar from destroying the Alam Gudar factory area. Apart from this, Mahsud Scouts also succeeded in preventing the lashkars from further burning the houses of Panj Piris in the Khajuri plain and the situation was brought to normal without any loss.

In July 1981 one wing was transferred to the Mohmand Rifles which again altered the composition the major change was the increase of Shilmani tribe which now had five platoons and Afridi strength was reduced to four platoons.

Corps was composed of two wings numbered 24 and 25 wings each having a strength of 698 scouts. Wings were commanded by majors, each wing had four rifle companies commanded by junior commissioned officers, rifle company was composed and organised on having three platoons and a platoon headquarters. A field battery was integral to the corps having a strength of 110 gunners who all were scouts, battery had 25 pounder guns. In the authorisation table the corps was supposed to have 20 officers and 55 JCOs along with 1559 scouts, 112 NCe and 15 NCu apart from 30 clerks; the most serious deficiency was in the category of

officers. A lieutenant colonel was in command, major as his adjutant and quartermaster with another three or four captains performing as wing commanders. One medical officer was also part of the organisation.

Work load was not much but it was diversified , being reserves of IGFC the option of being deployed and employed anywhere in Pakistan was a reality and in later years Mahsud Scouts remained deployed in Sindh for well over three years in early nineties. Later when the corps was upgraded to three wings than no 26 wing was added. Fort Salop, Jhansi Fort and Fort Milward were the three forts and three wings rotated among these.

Shin Kamar Operation 1975

Shin Kamar is an important pass which connects the Tirah , Maidan area with the Khajauri plains. Shin Kamar pass is as important as the Khyber Pass which is also close by and under control of Afridis. The best part of Shin Kamar is the relative ease and the availability of water all along. It leads to Tirah and then downward to Kabul valley. Tirah is almost 6000 feet in elevation.

Under Major General Naseer Ullah Babar SJ and bar, the IGFC of NWFP it was principally decided to push the writ of government to the Durand Line. Till then the tribal area was practically a no go area for the government.

In March 1975, the Mizh Mahsud took part in Shin Kamar operation in Khyber Agency when the dispute arose over construction of Fort Salop – Shin Kamar road between the government and the Afridis. The Afridi strongly resented it and tried to prevent its construction. Ist Mahsud Scouts troops had to be deployed in Shin Kamar (a restricted area) and accomplished task assigned to them with great success. In the end road was not completely constructed rather a track was made. The next issue was the check posts erecte4d on the road and checking of smuggled goods. It must be kept in mind that one of the finest production of hashish is cultivated in Tirah Valley. Afridi's tribal economy is centred around hashish cultivation and further distribution all over the world or at least its sale in Bara, smuggling and transport are another two key features of Afridi life style. Thus the construction of road and subsequent check posts were not appreciated by them and they remained a bone of contention .

Shin Kamar Operation 1993

On 22 February 1993, Zakha khel Afridis, who opposed the road construction from Shin Kamar to Tirah Valley and their chief Malik Nadar Khan raised a lashkar of 80-100 men including hired Afghans to stop the construction of road by force, for which they occupied strong positions in Shin Kamar, which dominated the surrounding area. To counter the hostile tribesmen, a

mobile gasht of Mahsud Scouts reached Shin Kamar on 22 February 1993. The hostile lashkar opened fire on them. The troops with the concurrence of political authorities also returned fire with heavy weapons. The situation remained tense upto 04 March 1993. On 04 March 1993, Mahsud Scouts, with the help of Khyber Rifles decided to give a final blow to the hostile tribesmen and captured all their positions. After exchange of fire and physical assault dislodged the hostile tribesmen from their positions. The tribesmen suffered four deaths without any casualties on own side. Later the force returned to Fort Salop safely.

On 18 March 1993, it was reported that a lashkar consisting 100-120 men has again occupied the heights in Shin Kamar area and started firing rocket launchers, which continued till 19 March. However, after lot of efforts, the heights were cleared from the miscreants. Two tribesmen were killed on our side by miscreant's fire while troops suffered no casualty.

On 16 April 1993, lashkar consisting of 100 - 150 men again occupied the heights of Shin Kamar area. On 18 April 1993, morning, Mahsud Scouts started advance. The troops faced heavy fire. Later on, 25 Pounder guns started firing in support of the advancing troops the hostile lashkar abandoned their positions and withdrew.

In 1996 the situation again demanded interference of Mahsud Scouts. Sipah a sub tribe of Afridi also have certain territorial claims and rights in Shin Kamar. They in December 1996 took actions against known criminal Zaira Jan and Milat Khan on the Fort Salop –Shin Kamar Road. The firing continued from early morning till noon when political authorities requested Mahsud Scouts intervention, by the time own scouts arrived at the scene at 1630 hours the situation was receding. Milat Khan had died and Zaira Jan was wounded. One stolen car, one pick up and one suspect Khitab Gul was arrested.

These are not the last words about Shin Kamar as from new millennium onwards a new kind of terrorism dawn on the valley.

1980-2000

In early sixties and till late seventies a tourist boom was encountered. People from all sphere of life would travel to Landi Kotal onwards to Kabul to watch Indian Movies. Landi kotal itself became a den of all kind of devilish activities. Pornography was common so was the hashish. Bara Market was centre of attraction for the people coming from down country for shopping. Soap, cloth, tobacco, parfumes , weapons and so on. It will not be out of proportion to write that no marriage

was complete till the dowry is not purchased from Bara was a common theme then.

Afridi tribe became the richest tribe among all other pathan tribes and unfortunately all this wealth was centered around activities which put them into international limelight. In mid eighties the Heroin was introduced in the country so was Kalashnikov both now synonymous with Afghan Jihad of 1979-1989. Haji Ayub Afridi an ex khasadar who shot to fame in 1946 when he had fired a shot on the Nehru who later became prime minister of India while he was touring and addressing the frontier province. Ayub Afridi was the uncrowned king of Heroin smuggling, production and marketing; thus for these twenty years a regular flow of baramptas were conducted against mischievous clans. Regular internal security duties in connection with Muharram was another constant charter of duty. Sports, training and ceremonial aspects were major shades of life at Mahsud scouts. Water shortage at Fort salop was a matter of concern and in 1981 the boring of another tube well was carried out.

Independence Day celebrations were always colourful. Starting with Namaz Shukrana at 0700 prayers at all three forts , Salop, Jhansi and Milward, at 0800 hours address of commandant and at 0900 hours hoisting of flag and singing of national anthem. In the evening at 1700 hours a friendly match of either basketball or

volleyball between the officers and JCOs the bara khana at 1930 hours and then a variety programme would finish the day in befitting manner.

In November 1981 a Brampta was carried out by Mahsud scouts under command Lieutenant Colonel Shah Dad khan with two companies of Mahsud scouts and two companies of Khyber Rifles in Dara Adam Khel ; eight persons were apprehended including much wanted Laiq Shah.

In 1982 an effort was made to name the wings after the heroes of 1971 War thus No.25 Wing became Mujeeb Wing, No.26 Wing was known as Wali Wing. However this did not last and old numbering of wings was resorted. Summer training of the corps was carried out with 27 Brigade which was stationed at Landi Kotal. On 22nd June 1982 Major General Muhammad Afzal IGFC inaugurated the gate ceremony of Fort Salop. It was the efforts of Lt Col shah Dad khan who had given the charge of Mahsud Scouts to Lt Col Fazli Moeed SJ a month before the ceremony. In August 1982 the field battery was permanently transferred to Mohmand rifles including 3.7 inch howitzer. In the same time period construction of a workshop was undergoing at Jhansi.

Sports were the main attraction with teams going all over the Pakistan to take part in various competitions the inter company competitions were held and conducted

at wing level then inter wing competitions and finally the inter corps matches as part of FC Week. Para teams were taking part in the meet on regular basis. It was in 1983 that MS won the coveted basketball trophy by beating KM at Parachinar by 53-45 points. In the inter wing declamation contest Sepoy Muhammad Ishaq stood first, Naik Imtiaz Ali of this corps stood second in inter corps declamation contest in 1983. 26 wing has the distinction of lifting the inter wing firing competition for the year 1983, in the same year the corps under Captain Qamar Ul Islam won the most coveted trophy of inter corps firing competition at Parachinar, so did the mortar platoon which also won the trophy.

Raising of third wing was carried out on 20 February 1986 and was given the serial number of No.27 Wing. It was in April 1986 that Besai feature was permanently occupied, eight platoons were initially employed and deployed.

Bara Operation 1987

The first serious encounter took place in January 1987 when a tribal jirga of over 3000 lashkiris comprising of Afridis confronted Mahsud scouts near Sheekhan, resultantly three maliks were killed in the shoot out and many other were wounded. By 22nd January a tactical headquarter was established at Bara and reinforcement from army in the shape of 22 Cavalry

was called upon. Lieutenant colonel Abdul Jamil commandant MS was the over all commander of the operation, additional wing from KR was also called in as reinforcement, a contingent from Thall Scouts also arrived on the scene on 23 January. It was only in the first week of March that the tactical headquarters was removed after the situation was brought under control. This was one rare occurrence otherwise the environment remained cordial. Afridi tribe has been a peaceful tribe and almost all its clans especially bordering the Peshawar like Malik Din Khel are realistic in mindset , preferring their economical outlook above everything else.

Gilgit 1988 was a sad tenure for the Mahsud Scouts, they had gone there in June in connection with sectarian riots which by itself was a rare incident at Gilgit till then. One scout Sepoy Mir Wali Mahsud of No.26 Wing was drowned in Gilgit River. The contingent remained there for another a year .

1988 however will be remembered for the fabulous performance of various sports teams. For the first time the inter corps championship was being held at Fort Salop's own basketball courts. Previously Mahsud Scouts used to organise such like events at Qayyum Stadium Peshawar. Mahsud Scouts won the basketball trophy beating Chitral Scouts on 14th July 1988. A month

later Mahsud Scouts was host to inter Civil armed forces basket ball championship which was won by FC NWFP.

1988 elections again saw the Mizh Mahsud spread all over the province for the internal security duties. They were deployed at Abbottabad, Chilas, Manshehra, Shinkiari to name few.

Mahsud Scouts in Sind. From February 1992 onwards Mahsud scouts were deployed in interior and urban Sindh. No.3 Wing was deployed at Moro to operate angst the dacoits , they joined back in Khajauri Plains in September 1994. The frequency of bramptas increased from once a quarter, it was now every month and then becoming every week, number of gasht were also increased.. For instance in June 1992 one Bramпта was carried out in general area Bara under command Captain Muddassar Bilal along with 58 scouts. Dacoit Khan Haider son of Bahadur Shalobar Kambar Khel was able to outwit the scouts but his brother Sher Haider and one other Ghulab Khan of same tribe were apprehended and handed over to political administration. Another such Bramпта was carried out in Fort Milward area in connection with kidnapping of a air force officer but nothing was found.

An unfortunate incident occurred in January 1994, on 25th January a procession of students along with elders stormed pass the Bara Bazar and threw stones on

Mahsud Scouts posts, later incident of firing also started in which one student was killed. On 27th January a mobile gasht of 72 led by officers passed through Bara. It was after a week of negotiations that matter was resolved. It was again in 2000 onwards when similar unrest was caused by the students in Bara.

Bajaur Operations of 1994. Summer again found Mahsud Scouts moving back and forth . Two companies along with three officers and 202 other ranks including seven JCOs left Fort Salop on 21 July 1994, they were back to fort Salop on 28th July. One wing was deployed at Daggar and this wing moved to Bajaur agency on 10th October v1994, later another wing comprising of 450 men also moved into the area on 10th November, Major Akhtar Mahmood was the commander of the force. There were few wounded casualties but they all were discharged after a fortnight. There was one incident of particular interest as it was the first such occasion in Mahsud Scouts. On 21st October 1994 Naik Miraj Ali Orakzai of 3Wing was shot dead by Sepoy Javed Hussain Orakzai. There have been instances of soldiers deserting the Mahsud Scouts running away with their weapons , there were two such incidents in the eighties.

Opening act of 1995 was the Mahsud Scouts led by Commandant Lt Col Sikander Ilyas Lodhi carried out a raid on Ilam Guddar factories on the night of 28/29

January and recovered approximately 3000 maund of charas, opium and heroin and also apprehended nineteen notorious anti social elements without any loss. Another major incident related to these seizures was an attack on the Mahsud Scouts convoy in July 1995 in which major Sana Ullah was wounded along with Naib Subedar Muhammad Riaz and Havildar Haider Ali of AC Squadron. The end result of the skirmish was the establishing of posts by the Mahsud scouts at Shin Kamar, Milaward, Besai -1 and 2. Two officers of Mahsud scouts were kidnapped by the locals in August , Captain Wisal Muhammad and Captain Mohsin Ali both were released after a day without any harm.

The Afridi's are very keen as far as the compensation is concerned, irony of fate is that drivers of Frontier corps are bit dare devil in these stony tracks. Killing of a lamb or even hen under the wheels of mahsud scouts can arise a huge hue and cry calling for jirgas also as last resort, the main aim is to fetch as much price as possible. Thus a lamb of average value can fetch almost four times to his owner by dying down under the wheels of Mahsud Scouts.

On 27th October 1994 a boy of Aka Khel Afridi came under the vehicle of Mahsud scouts, luckily he was only hurt, he was taken by the Mahsud Scouts to the Peshawar hospital and while they were coming back the road was blocked and the scouts vehicle was forcefully

snatched away. It was returned later on. There were a host of kidnapping in the area for ransom and as such many bramtas were carried out. Commissioner income tax was kidnapped and later was shot dead and his body was abandoned in the area, it took place in September 1996. Consequently no less than two dosen houses were demolished in various localities. Another big seizure was carried out in September when 1125 kilograms of hashish, four kilograms of opium and bottles of liquor were recovered.

1997 initial days were full of Bramptas, in February no less than eight bramtas were conducted on a single week i.e., 18th- 25th February. Rest of 1997 was practically spent in carrying out bramtas which were meant to cleanse the area of unwanted persons and purify the environments free of drugs., both were daunting tasks in Afridi domain. These operations were carried out among all clans of Afridi, In august a Brampta was carried out in Malik Din Khel area, a day earlier similar operation was carried out in Sipah area.

Tree of Discord

In 1989 when the present expansion of the fort was undertaken by the Subedar Major Khial Afridi, a wall was built around the fort , however on the road end which leads to Shin Kamar the gate of the fort was just on the edge with family quarters and playing fields

across the road. There was a tree close to the family quarters which was an obstruction to the drivers and every now and then its bushes would damage the wind screen. Commandant ordered its cutting down, as the scouts gathered around for its cutting the local started gathering and by evening it became a political affair with local strongly rejecting its cutting as it was on their lands. The operation was postponed and similar efforts were made by all subsequent commandants but tree remained defiant. It was finally in 2010 that when the wall was built around the fort only then it was cut down , it was not used for any purpose rather the trunk is lying in the open, lest the owner comes back and ask for the property.

Last days of Millennium

The last major Brampta of 1999 ended in the death of Sepoy Hussain Khan Shilmani and sepoy Khobiya Khan was injured. Brampta was carried out on 1st October 1999, to apprehend notorious outlaw Bahadur Khan. The force was led by Major Naseem along with Captain Sanaullah and Shahid Khan. The outlaw house was cordoned but intensive fire from the house kept the force at bay till these two valiant scouts stalked forward and shoot the Bahadur Khan, in the process Shilmani died on the spot due to wounds and Khobiya Khan survived. Both were recommended for Sitara i Basalat.

In November 1999 the over all command structure of all Frontier corps was elevated thus now a Colonel became the commandant with lieutenant colonels as wing commanders. Colonel Zakir Hussain was the first commandant in such capacity.

2000-2008

World underwent a transition after 9/11 and its effects were felt all over the globe but Pakistan was the most affected country and region. Borders with Afghanistan were sealed and Taliban were restricted in movement. A war against militancy that started in 2002 is still going on in the tribal area.

Within Bara Valley or Khajauri Plains or more precisely within the area of operations of mahsud scouts the heat of war was felt from 2008 onwards. Initially the focus of counter insurgency remained in south Waziristan and slowly it spread upward engulfing North Waziristan and then into Swat valley and it was in 2009 that operation against Afridi was initiated. In terms of tribes the Mahsuds bore the brunt of this militancy followed by Wazir. Different splinter groups emerged some were loyal to the government and other were not. This was the first and major insurgency that took place along the Western frontiers since 1919 .

Mizh Mahsud 2000-2007

Life in Mahsud Scouts was not affected much by the war against terror, there are many facets of this aspect. Historically very seldom the whole of Patahn tribes have risen together, last it happened was in 1898 with Tirah uprising. Frontier Corps as a whole took it in stride and gave an composed outlook. There were regular and planned competitions in sports, qirat, declamation, firing, band, and annual week was the Wimbeldon of the year. All corps commanders alongwith subedar majors and representatives of all qaums would gather at all the corps headquarters honoured by President of Pakistan or Prime Minister or Chief of army, navy or airforce, governor, IGFC, and son on. Mahsud scouts had a wonderful time, its teams and firers brought laurels after the laurels, they were almost unbeatable at Fort Salop in any competition including band.

Their most significant contribution was the Mahsud army Public school which was opened on 20th April 2000 by IGFC Major General Taj Ul Haq and Commandant Zakir Hussain. In October 2003 Qirat competition was held at Landi Kotal, Mahsud scouts Naib Khateeb Shah Hussain obtained eight position; very next year competition was held at DFort Salop in February and Mahsud Scouts were adjudged second in Hifz and third in Qirat, week later firing team in inter unit firing competition held at Thall stood seventh.

Mizh mahsud stood second in the orienteering competition held at Landi Kotal on 1st December 2003.

Mahsud scouts performed well in the courses too, lance Naik Ali Marjan Afridi stood second in FC course of 82mm Mortar. In the religious teachers declamation contest also held at Fort Salop in August 2004, Naib Khateeb Muhammad Khan stood first with Tochi Scouts second and Chitral Scouts third.

Haiti, Naik mBakht Wali Khattak, Naik Hayat Khan Yousafzai and Lance Naik Fida Muhammad have the distinction of being the pioneers among Mahsud scouts; they are the very first to serve overseas with UNO at Haiti Police, they departed on 20th August 2004. In 2007 the last year of peace in the valley, Basketball championship was organised at Landi Kotal the Mahsud scouts stood second. Football championship was held at Parachinar in June, Mahsud scouts lost all matches and stood 12th.

PAF trainer aircraft crashed at Murad Talab on 8th June both pilots ejected safely and Mahsud scouts cordoned the area.

Change of command. Colonel Mahmood Raza was reverted to Army after completing his tenure of command and he was taken over by Colonel Mujahid Hussain a gunner on 28th August 2007.

First wave of trouble in Bara started in April with the student demonstration and razing of Mangal Bagh's house. However, real trouble in Bara Valley started on **1st September 2007** when the Taliban announced their arrival in the valley by carrying out a blast and dropping a written warning. After forty-eight hours the conspiracy was cleared when the real culprits belonging to Badr Mujaheeden and Jaish Muhammadi were arrested who confessed of the blast; they were picked up by the Mangal Bagh men and tried them. By this act Mangal Bagh or Lashkar i Islami took the notion of victory, it was very similar to the killing of Kirri group in Miranshah by Taliban in December 2005.

From this point onwards Lashkar i Islami men started roaming inside the Bara bazaar carrying weapons and khassadars just turned their eyes other way around. Mangal Bagh showed his force on 11th September by entering the bazaar from Shalobar Chowk and exiting Alhaj Market in a procession of forty vehicles all armed to teeth.

Nari Qarwal Post.

This post is a classic example of frontier warfare and how it differs from the standard warfare or conventional warfare. The post was established in June after the clashes of Namdar and Zareef group, now Namdar group had the reservation about the location of

post as due to its height it in their opinion violates their purdah, flexibility is the key word in frontier warfare, in the end the political administration carried out a meeting with elders, on the site inspection was carried out and in the end very amicably the post was adjusted as per the satisfaction of the tribes and hostilities renewed. On 23rd September 2007 Namdar group lost four of its men where as Zareef had one dead in the battle of ego.

Arrival of tanks at Fort Salop, it was 23 September 2007 at 1545 hours when the three tanks arrived at Fort Salop from armoured corps centre, it has been after the years that tanks have arrived at Fort Salop, they certainly imposed themselves. Later in the time the tanks crossed Shin Kamar Pass as well , first time in the history of the area that tanks have crossed Shin Kamar pass.

Lashkar i Islam had an eye ball contact with Mahsud Scouts who stopped them entering into Bara Bazar with weapons. Lashkar grudgingly complied with instruction but showed its side by checking the people for not wearing cap. ‘ Ghunads of Lashkar i Islam have started taking law into their ahnds and political administration is taking it lightly, it is recommended that our troops be allowed to shoot if the ghundaas repeat

such like incidents'.⁵ Mahsud Scouts further increased its strength by placing additional scouts at Minara.

Political administration on the other hand had a feather in the cap when both Kuki Khel and Qambar Khel tribes agreed on the construction of Levies training centre at Bara, the agreement was reached at Khyber house Peshawar on 5th October 2007. There are factions among the Afridi tribe and each faction is realistic in nature and looks after own interest first. Afridis did not allowed the Taliban to disrupt their trade route passing through the Afridi land; it is something different if a faction among themselves starts playing with fire even then the Kuki Khel kept Managl Bagh away from their area.

Death of an apotheosis' . There was a man called Shirin Khan among the Qambar Khel who often used to claim himself to be a prophet, he was mentally sick and as such was given the benefit of doubt by the jirga, however on 18th September at noon the Qambar Khel men gathered around Sheeren's house and after fifteen minutes of wait started indiscriminate firing and later went satisfied.

Fort Salop.

⁵ War diary. Special sitrep No. 150/13/x/G at 5.10.07

It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations.

Fort Salop today is the headquarters of the Mahsud Scouts, Fort did not had any outer boundary wall, almost all the forts constructed in Khajauri Plains by the British did not had any outer boundary, it was in 2010 that Colonel Naseer Janjua the commandant initiated the project and completed within his tenure a remarkable feat indeed, it is worth mentioning that Colonel Janjua has a reputation of building walls around the Forts he did it at Boya where he was commanding a wing in Tochi Scouts. The present office block which stands majestically in the heart of the Fort Salopt was also completed by him.

Fort today covers an area of 10 acres with a twenty feet bricked wall all around having sentry towers at regular intervals, the water source is well, initially there was only one well but now two wells cater for the water requirement, there is electricity with generators as stand by. The complete construction of the fort which excluding the main office block and new medical inspection room dates back to early days; it consist of tin roof huts and long elongated barracks, the roof is invariably painted in red colour. In last five years it has gone through major renovation which are still underway. The current project is to construct the bunkers for the

troops and already three such bunkers have been completed by colonel Naeem Sarwar since taking over command in mid January 2013

Fort has a main gate which is a new one due to construction of wall, after a distance of 500 meters stands the old and original building, it had a wall which were removed or pulled down in post 1947. Inside the fort the troops residential area is on the east where as the office blocks stands in centre with officers mess and officers residence including commandant house adjacent. A central small park with a miniature lake, Birds cages adorning it.

On the outer perimeter the artillery, armour and signals occupy the main grounds with sentries posted on the posts round the clock. In recent years Fort has been receiving mortars from the Afridis on regular basis. There are six families of troops and three families of officers residing inside the fort.

It receives fresh ration on every Wednesday, pay is collected on the first of every month from Peshawar and brought back to fort under heavy guard, pay day is a happy day. The area is generally level with a very gradual slope. There are few old trees still left despite almost eighty years of living, the two oldest trees flank the office block on south. By and large soil is tough , water shortage has not helped in putting forward an

orchard worth mentioning and neither there is any crop however small kitchen gardens still add colour to the dinning tables of officers and other ranks. The lambs issued as part of fresh ration are a regular sight, they move in herd and spend the days nibbling on what ever grass is available.

Sheen Kamar

On Wednesday I went to Sheen Kamar which means *green* mountains, it was not planned to visit it not planned to visit today but then Major Imran informed me in the morning that the trip is planned . Myself and Captain Ehtisham along with an escort. The Fort Salop controls the route as it is constructed on the eastern descent of the Pass. This pass is as important as the Khyber Pass it is inhabited by the Zia Khel tribe of Afridis. We drove out , it was sunny and warm. The very first village outside the fort is deserted now. The original road used to pass along the boundary of the fort similar to Boya Fort in North Waziristan.

The road is a constant climb but it is gradual, on our right the branch of Bara River flows mostly dry with only a silver lining of water, the village of Besai is located on a high plateau with houses well spread, having plenty of tree. As one climbs up through winding road one comes across instances of it being blown up by the miscreants which in this case is Mangal Bagh.

Mangal Bagh is the war lord of the area couple of years ago he was a conductor on the Bar-Peshawar bus and according to the commandant has made money through selling of hashish.

After twenty odd minutes of drive the Sheen Kamar Pass is arrived, it is a narrow pass where in 2000 the project of constructing the road linking the area with Tirah was inaugurated and completed after two years. It is not a marvel of engineering feat but a mark of political acumen. The Afridi tribe is known for its commercial acumen and many a times the various factions have split among themselves chiefly on the issue of having more share in the trade. I met Lieutenant colonel Faisal of Swat Scouts, he was waiting with his junior commissioned officers at the pass. I feel bit embarrass in having being given this honour it speaks of the officers. Faisal has joined directly from Lahore where he was commanding the Guides cavalry. What a shock it must be to him to come from such an illustrious regiment to become part of Swat Scouts. He did not showed any resentment. Very courteous and polite officer who seems to be learning the ropes of the area. We drove forward now the area on our left was open green wide valley and on our right it was a mountainous range. Soon we reached the turn from where one track leads to the right the old pass if one can call it. We pass through another village and reach the last post of Swat Scouts where two

tanks were parked in awkward position. Tanks are being used here in direct firing role. Our next and last stop was the village defence committee post.

It looked like any Taliban post, there was one sentry carrying a Kalashnikov and standing tall and proud on a fortified bunker , another young man was giving the sentry duty in the cover of a olive tree and another one bit far looking at the approaches from tirah. There is only one way and that is the road through which vehicles can move although any one can come down from the adjoining hill which is on the right of the road. My interest in these men was to see how these natives fight and live, it is purely luck that these are now enemy of Managl Bagh whom they lovingly call Mangli. The only reason that these men have turned against him is due to the fact that Mangal is from Sepah tribe a sub caste of Afridi where as these men are from Zia Din Khel sub tribe of Afridi's. This is the art of frontier warfare and this is where the political agent comes in handy by dividing the tribes . these sub tribes are more concerned about their own interests than looking after the ideological values of Managl Bagh.

. The interesting feature about these **village defence committee** is that they are the the true and classic militia which Machiavelli was so profoundly fond of and propagated. The English Militia of 17th Century is another example of these militia; the natives

taking care of the town and villages against the miscreants. English militia was paid and fed upon public tax which was levied for the occasion and purpose. Here at **Sheen Kamar** pass these men of Zakha Khel tribe are fed by the Mahsud Scouts or the political agent indeed. The weapons or more precisely the ammunition is provided by the Mahsud Scouts on behalf of political agent; this is how the Frontier Corps took birth. The Turi Militia of Kurram Valley was the very first example among pathan otherwise Colonel Durand had raised Gilgit Scouts in 1889.

We bid them farewell after embracing each other which is the custom as well you cannot enter or leave a post without shaking or embracing each other it may be just touching but it has to be done. On our way back the valley was now on our right, in front the Bara Valley lush green. This greenery here is deceptive because these are not fruit trees rather shrubs, there is one particular shrub known as gurgoray which has small fruit and is eaten. This route connects Tirah with Bara valley and is much pleasant than the Khyber Pass, its only limitation is its rather bit of extent as compare to Khyber which I have not seen yet.

There was an old grave yard next to Zaka Khel post across the track, I was narrated by one of the tribesman as being an old graveyard which was told to them by their grandfathers. We stopped by at one oasis like place to see the caves, after walking through the

bushy track led by the Mahsud Scouts we entered the mouth of a cave and then I followed the others , it was dark and cool. The light of mobile phone was not enough to guide but I managed it and followed other , through a labyrinth of turns we all reach at the end which was a circular flat mud end. The height was good enough even for me to walk straight and erect. We made our exit through another way and suddenly found ourselves on a open patch with trees around. These caves are man made they re all around, they are in villages along the way. They were and are used to keep the animals insides in winter and also the humans. Their defensive value is beyond words to explain. In old times and still the tribes in time of war especially the women and children can take refugee here and so can the militia.

Tuesday.

I woke up at 0730 hours rather the waiter came to wake me up. The room where I am staying has an attached room as well and the person came out of the room thus I was bit at loss whether he is an officer who is living next door or an attendant; it is difficult to judge when all are wearing kameez shalwar and that too early in the morning. It was a bright sunny day, I ordered a cup of tea which was not good somehow the other it is difficult to find a decent cup of tea everywhere. Major Imran who is performing the duty of DQ was my guide

and we had to go to Fort Jhansi first and then to the Fort Milliward and back. It looks simple but last night I had a second thought on the whole trip. There is a cease fire with the Taliban and everyone seems to be bit relaxed but I am a firm believer and so are many others who regard these cease fires and agreements as a lull before the storm, none knows when the hell is going to break out but everyone consoles other with these words of peace.

I am still not very much clear about the direction of north, it is only after ascertaining the north that one can make a relationship between geography and history. We left the fort in a hilux with another hilux having our escort. In the vehicle I sat behind with Major Imran and o an ambush laid on us and the reaction of the scout; not a very good feeling. The main reason is the easy attitude of everyone here and secondly it seems almost impossible to stop an suicide attack or ambush, both rare in this area as compared to north Waziristan. We passed Shaaks Fort, area is green with plenty of shrubs 'keekar' but not of plantation or crops. Initially the passage out from fort passes through a culvert, then burnt out and destroyed shops a sharp bend, another destroyed culvert and drive straight then comes the small town of Qambar Khel. It is not like a typical frontier town rather an urban outskirts of Peshawar. Wall chalking regarding the election{it is due today on NA 4 I believe} it has been postponed in the initial 11 May elections. The moment I

saw few women clad in burqa walking in the stony causeway I felt relax. Their walking and presence outside is a n assuring sign of peace and modern enlightment of the area. There were school boys all clad in white dress although in Frontier they wear militia colour; could be a private school. I am not wrong if I write that I have seen maximum wall chalking in FATA regarding the private schools. Males were sitting idle on the roadside probably waiting for polling but it could be custom or habit also, none was carrying any kind of arms

Fort Jhansi & Fort Milward

These two forts are other two major forts in the area, first one Is in fact Fort Shakas which is a rather new construction it was handed over to FC in 1982. Fort Jhansi comes first, its crow distance from Salop is not more than four kilometers but as the area is infested with mines/IED and ambush sites thus a long detour is forced upon. The road is now a track with often blown up culverts and almost all houses are demolished partially or complete. The area around belongs to Malik Din Khel clan, they are more business like and have soft attitude towards the FC. For Jhansi one has to pass astride the road running parallel with Hayatabad but on one side is the settled area and other side is free tribal area.

Bara Bazar the hub of Mangal Bagh is now deserted like a ghost town , there are over 7500 shops in

the two miles stretch of road all dealing with hashish and weapons. These markets have been occupied by the Khyber Wing of Khyber Rifles under command of Mahsud scouts. The shops have their wares intact, they have fabulous rooms upstairs with woodwork and carpets. From Bara we drove past Dogra which is a n army unit headquarters, the track is in dirt with bushes all around, needles to say that no defence against IED is possible in such terrain, other than jammers but you cannot do much about a pressure mine. At Dogra which used to be a Sikh outpost is now a complex of three factories owned by Haji Ayub Afridi who himself died couple of years ago.

Jhansi is on the bank of Bara River, an old post constructed in 1928, it looks after the area which is plain . There is no wall around the fort , there is a squadron of armour, battery of artillery and so on. Construction is all barracks and plenty of them are here. Two years ago it came under an fire attack from Mangal Bagh men. It have a beautiful Chinaar garden as well which was constructed in 1980 by the wing commanders. All along there was noise of jets flying over head. Conversation revolves around the activities of the miscreants, morale high.

Fort Milward is the last of the forts on the southern edge of the valley, there are two more forts like Kishengarh but it is not under Frontier Corps. Milward

had a worst scenario when nine scouts including the wing commander were killed in an ambush.

Fort Milward remained with FSF till 1976 then it was handed over to FC. Fort is not that big but it have open spaces with Bara River branch running on the southern edge, There are Kiker Trees all around with very little space for irrigation. I had a briefing at Milward and also the lunch. Most of buildings have been repaired and altered but still a vast number of original hutments. Families of troops six-ten lives in every fort and face the same music as the men are facing. Light is rare but there are generators and their use is quite liberal.

Operation Sirat –e- Mustaqeem

On 28th June 2008 much awaited operation against Magal bagh started under code name Sirat-e-Mustaqee. One troop of tanks ex 21 Hoirse, own tank and two APC aapart from bomb disposal parties estabvlished road block on Bara – Tirah road, first objective was to capture the Gandhao Post from miscreants. Commandant Colonel Mujahid Jussain led the operation. Post oitself was vacant but surrounding heights were occupied. The suspected bunkers were destroyed through tank fire; this resultantly compelled the miscreants to move into the Tirah Valley, one miscreant was killed. Mangal bagh ow3n house was also demolished using explosives, Kohi Markaz was partially damaged at 1830 hours and force

came back to Fort salop . Curfew was imposed in the Bara sub division for the day. One wing of tochi scouts was also present at Fort salop.

On 29th June at 1340 hours the ansar Islam lashkar markaz was also demolished. On the same day while coming back the private jail of Mangal bagh at Kohi was also demolished, it was reported by the locals about its presence and location.

On 1st July Ilm Guddar was the target, one kidnapped person Gul Miran Kuki Khel was released from the bondage, three abductees were also caught. Pir House was under the control of Managl Bagh , it was also freed after a heavy shoot out in which four miscreants later surrendered to the Mahsud scouts. On 2nd July , Bara area was combed and sanitised, patrolling was carried out through Kohi, Mandi Kas, Dogras, spin Qabar and back to Fort Salop, eleven persons belonging to Mangal Bagh group were arrested along with eight SMG and two 9mm rifles.

Mahsud Ambushed

8th July 2008 in real sense brought the war to the Mahsud Scouts, one vehicle was coming from Hayatabad to Fort Milward in relation with an administration duty of Dairy Farm. One kilometre short of the Fort Milward, both single cabin vehicles, one carrying milk and other as the escort came under fire,

area is thick with growth providing ample opportunities for any killing party. After fifteen minutes of firing four scouts of Mahsud had embraced shahadat and other eight were injured. Naik Abdul Rehman Bhittani, Naik Rehmat Ullah Mahsud, Sweeper Manzoor and lance Naik Muhammad Zahoor Shilmani were among the dead. Surprisingly only two SMG and one Rifle G-3 were missing; it was all they were carrying.

By end August all additional troops were deinducted from the Shakas, . Haji Namdar group took on the Taliban head on , they carried out an ambush on 20th august 2008 killing three persons of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan {TTP} and one was injured. On the same five more persons of TTP wre kidnapped by Haji Namdar group.

September 2009

Month of September began with miscreants attack on fort Milward, they attacked with mortars and RPG-7 but they landed short of gun positions. On 11th September three more guns of 130mm m calibre reached Fort Milward from Jamrud. Mangal bagh alaso kidnapped one Tandal of mahsud scouts, rahat Gul afridi who was kidnapped by Mangal bagh group but later released on the intervention of political administration, it was a case of misunderstanding. In another similar acsse Subedar Daulat Khan was coming with his family when

he was taken away on gun point , his family was left unhurt. In retaliation Mahsud scouts in next two days arrested no less than twelve persons belonging to the Mangal Bagh group. On 22 September in an abortive ambush laid by Mangal Bagh the scouts retaliated and resultantly four miscreants were killed.

December 2008. Operation Daralam

In mid December the local population took out a procession for the supply of electricity however it was the dying days of the year when the operation DarAlam was put into action on 30th December 2008. The force comprising of one company of 3 Sind regiment, company of Mahsud scouts, platoon of SOG, Troop of tanks from independent armoured corps squadron{IACS} and bomb disposal team , air was on call thus an air contact team was also taken along; Commandant mahsud scouts led the force. At 1100 hours Cobra gunship helicopters were called in which soften up the target at Qadwar Killi, nine rounds of tanks and 11 mortar bombs also punished the target area, 10 AK regiment's battalion mortars were also in support. Target was nothing but a compound comprising of three mud houses belonging to Saifur and Adamjee, all in all seventeen persons belonging to various tribes were arrested.

On last day of year , the force left Fort Shakas at 0900 hours and cordoned houses in Sher Sakhi colony at 1030 hours. Over 300 houses were searched and 119 suspects were arrested. Najeeb house was the next target , Najeeb himself surrendered and his house was demolished, 126 suspects were arrested out of which there were 63 locals and 63 Afghanistan. Haji Monin was the next on line and he also surrendered alongwith six of his followers to the force , his house was also demolished.

2009

Operation Dar Alam continued with force again setting out of Fort shakas under command Commandant Mahsud Scouts. Adamje House was the target which was cordoned off at 0930 hours, composition of force remained almost unchanged from the first day of operation. Adamjee was arrested and house demolished. Jandol's house was next to go, 502 cartons of meal ready to eat of NATO was recovered, two more houses were demolished namely that of Johar and Obaidullah both were razed to ground. Weapons were recovered but they were neither modern nor deadly in nature , one 8mm rifle, one 7mm rifle and couple of hundred of rounds. Alamdar's house was the last to be demolished on the very first day of year . all in all 143 suspects were arrested.

2nd January was no different from other days as force set out from Fort shakas at 0700 hours, Wazir Dand market in Jamrud was cordoned, 50 odd shops were demolished with excavator. Another operation was carried out at hayat Khan Serai at 0900 hours, force then moved towards Kharkhano where two markets were demolished and at 1100 hours house of Zalmai was demolished. Most of the items recovered were of commercial value like Wine bottles {63 in number} hasish packets{35} opium seven packets, heroin half kilogram , few odd weapons and fake currency all trade marks of afridi enterprise. On 3rd January , wall chalking of different groups was removed by a force undercommand Lt Col Asif.

The big catch was found on 4th January , Jalat Khan's house was searched and explosive laden vehicle and suicide kjackets were found. Peartion continued into second week of January as well with search of houses and their demolishing creating a favourable impact among the local population , slowly but gradually the area was being cleared of anti social elements and miscreants. Majority of the suspects were mainly anti social elements very few were miscreants in true sense. Uptill 10th January more than 200 suspects were arrested, in the process many kidnapees were recovered and equal number of kidnappers were arrested, stolen cars were also handed over to the political administration. One

Saudi national Zaibi-ul-taifa was also arrested in one of the saeersch operation carried out on 21st January 2009. One side effect of these operations was the breaking down of taliban's administrative support, all their supportsw were being atken to the atsk, workshops where the miscraenst were getting their vehicles repaired were closed down and mechanics arrested.

By end March the operation was called off after desired results were achieved. Biggest cache of arms were recovered from Haji Market in alam Guddar area, Wahid and Saifoor two most wanted criminal houses ewere demolished, 31 suspects were arrested, weapons confiscated included 75mm RR, RPG-7 , 12.7mm gun, 82mm Mortar to name few. Narcotics factories at Alam Guddar were also arided in the last week of March where 80 kilograms of hasish was confiscated from one house. The over all catch was 50 tons of hasish. By last week of March the focus was shifted towards the aka Khel area.

Dr Khan Kidnapped

An operation was launched in the first week of May 2009. It started after the frontier Constabukary bus was hit on 7th May with an IED cnear the Kohat Tunnel resultantly three constabulary men were injured. On 11th May an suicide attack was carried out against the constabuklary, one embraced shahadat and sevben othes were injured.

Dr Khan Bangash the honorary captain and subedar major of 3 Wing alongwith Sepoy Sajjad Bangash were kidnapped by miscreants while he was travelling in his own vehicle, they were travelling from Salim Podst towards Milward Fort

May also saw the conflict between the khassadars and mahsud scouts, the back ground was that on 17th May a vehicle was suspicious enough to warrant checking, the occupants simply rushed towards the near by khassadar post at Sheikhon Bridge. The khassadars started protecting the men who have atken refugee inside by claiming them to be khassadars a scuffle erupted. After an hour the QRF was sent to apprehend the miscreants this QRF came under heavy fire at Bara. Later Lt col asif went inside the post but after heated discussion the khassadar subeadr simply cocked his weapon but Lt col asif boldly grabbed the weapon and arrested the Subedar. Later these khassadars were handed over to the political administration, all khassadrs were from qambar Khel tribe. Cobras punished the Khawangi in Aka Khel area as part of Eagle Swoop operation on 30th May.

MI-17 Helicopter

On 3rd June 2009 a MI-17 helicopter of Army aviation crashed in Orakzai agency. Mahsud Scouts were task to reach the crash site, Commandant alongwith QRF

managed to reach the site, helicopter was completely destroyed and all passengers were burnt to death. Since the wreckage was found close to tariq afridi markaz thus it was suspected taht he has something to do in this regard. Next day an aircraft accident investifgtion team was atken to the site, a company of 4 FF was also part of this force.A Cobra provided aerial support, however when the Cobras went for refuelling the army and Mahsud scouts came undere intense fire from adjoinihng heights. 55 Miscraents were reported to be killed in this skirmish.⁶

In july miscraenst targets were shelled mainly on intelligence reports, house searches were also carried but more emphasis was laid upon checking the movement of locals and their acrs. Not much was found other than opium and hasish which was being smuggled into the settled areas. It was reported taht majority of attacks carried out in Peshawar have their base in Bara . On 12th july 2009 an operation was conducted in Bara early in the morning bat suspected palces art shinko, Qambar Khel. Air cover was provided by gunship helicopters, few houses were destroyed alongwith two vehicles. In another operation carried out on intelligence tip, house of Jan Muhammad was searched, Haviladar said habib was awarded with a captured 12 Bore shotgun for his

⁶ War diary Mahsud scouts.

exemplary bravery in the operation during which seven suspects were arrested.

Nigerian Kidnappers

On 29th July an operation was conducted in Sipah area where six Nigerian kidnapped by Mangal bagh group were kept in a private jail, they were released from bondage, two of the kidnappers belong to Zakha Khel tribe where as the third was from Shinwarei tribe.

Sepoy Muhammad Arif Afridi, embraced shahadat in one such operation, it was conducted on 6th August 2009 on a Mangal bagh group house, extensive fire was exchanged, Mahsud Scouts fired 26 rockets of RPG-7, the highest in any one operation. Arif was shot dead while he was chasing a miscreant. Another high intensity fire exchange took place on 10th August in which three scouts were injured. This location in Qambar Khel Azarai Shalobar was kept engaged next day also employing Cobra helicopters, one company of Mahsud scouts a company of Khyber rifles, SOG-1 company and one tank took part in the operation. On 13th the Khyber rifle company was hit with an IED resultantly three scouts of Khyber rifles embraced shahadat while four others were injured.

Mahsud scouts apart from these sting operations were also carrying out regular gasht in the area, mostly of two or three hours.

14th September 2009 was another eventful day, a search and cordon operation was carried out in Malik din Khel area, at 1400 hours the QRF moved out from Fort Salop and after an hour of driving was at the site, it was the house of Taj Muhammad and Asghar Khan nothing was found thus the search operation was extended another 500 meters ahead and this is where the things went wrong, the fire from miscreants took the life of Sepoy Sadiq Hussain Turi and Lt Col Muhammad Kamran was hit in the shoulder with a bullet. Mahsud scouts killed four miscreants in this encounter and three were caught. Tanks fired 18 rounds, 11 RPG-7 were fired and over 700 rounds of 7.62 mm were fired apart from throwing of 15 hand grenades. A mine in the form of anti tank mine was detected in mid September in Shin Kamar area.

By the start of winter patrolling, mobile gasht and check post were erected all around the area and suspects were being caught and handed over to political administration on daily basis. Suspects were either interrogated by the intelligence set up of Frontier Corps or by the army. After intensive scrutiny the people were classified as white or black, white means that person is cleared and as such was then released from custody.

In October the Fort Salop was hit hard by the miscreants using mortar and rockets which are non precision out of ten rockets which they fired six landed

insidde the fort., damage was minor with only five scouts receiving splinters , one was treated by own doctor and four others were rfered to CMH Peshawar.

31st October 2009

A black day for mahsud scouts, at 1145 hours the routine patrolling of the area was being conducted on a Toyota single acbin vehicle, it was a sunny day with breeze flowing, Naaib Subedar Granbadshah was sitting on the front seat, they had left Fort salop and were heading towards the sdur gar area when a balst happened, it was a remote controlled IED, seven scouts embraced shahadat on the spot. There wee wto vehicles , the other vehicle remained unhurt and they evacuated the acsualtiues to the Fort salop.

In retaliation an extensive patrolling was conducted to apprehend the culprits eight persaons all from Malik din Khel tribe were arrested on 6th October, one Mahsud scout Seppoy Said Nabi Jan embraced shahadat while two more csuffered injuries. Meanwhile Fort salop was also targeted by miscreanst and no less tahn 30 shells were received within a span of an hour, however damage was not much only four scouts were injured. Ganado Post was next to be targeted a fire arid was carried out by miscreants. Same day[20th November 2009} a QRF of Khyber rifles was victim of an IED when it was proceeding to shin Kamar for the provision of artion and

fresh to the scouts deployed there, one Havildar Muhammad ashraf embraced shahadat while three other were injured. A QRF of Mahsud scouts then went to the site for evacuation, it also supplied the much needed ration to the post at Shin Kamar.

Khawak Ba De Sham 24th November 2009

In November 2 Wing of Mahsud Scouts and 1 Wing of Khyber Rifles took part in the above named operation which was conducted in the valley to apprehend the miscreants behind recent surge of violence. Fire support was provided from Fort Salop in the form of 130mm and 25 pounder artillery fire. 9 NLI and 40 FF were the two infantry regiments who spearheaded the operation. Corps Commander and IGFC Major General Nadir Zeb visited the Mahsud Scouts on 2nd December

Media mob was briefed at Fort Salop on 30th November 2009, almost all media houses were present, most obnoxious was the Geo followed by Aaj and Express, most sensible was the PTV. The private media houses have only one concern and that is to make money out of a news irrespective of its authenticity.

During the operation houses were searched and sting operations carried out almost on daily basis. Last major operation was conducted on 28th and 29th December 2009, ten people were held in custody, 100

kilogram of hashish was confiscated, Lewana who was the commander of of miscreants was killed in a shoot out on 29th in area Yousaf Talao.

Induction of recruits. 9th batch of recruits had their passing out at Fort Salop , 198 recruits were trained by Mahsud Scouts, out of these 65 were posted in Mahsud Scouts and 113 in Thall Scouts with remaining posted to Orakzai Scouts. Alternatively these recruits were trained at Thall and Fort Salop. 12th Batch was passed out on 18th July 2009 at Fort Salop. In 2012 the recruits were being trained within the Mahsud Scouts at Fort Salop. For specialist training the courses were being arranged at Jalozaï or Warsak under HQFC. Field Firing and battle inoculation were also carried regularly. In June 2008 it was conducted at Nowshehra ranges

A new competition in line with environment was the inter unit sniper competition which was held at Swat Scouts in February 2009, two officers, one JCO and 10 scouts participated from Mizh Mahsud and stood fourth similar results were achieved in the inter unit small arms firing competition .

Colonel Naseer Janjua an armoured corps officer who had also served in Tochi Scouts took over the command on 25th august 2009.

2010

Year started with a peace for a week and then on 16th January Lt Col Sheraz of Mahsud Scouts who was recently posted to the Mahsud led an operation in Spin Qabar Khel, it was a whole day operation in which two companies of NLI also took part, thirteen soldiers of NLI were injured to miscreant firing. Two more search and cordon operation were conducted within a week and over two dozen people were apprehended, this pattern remained in vogue in February as well. In March a deviation from standard teaching was made when on 17th, Mahsud Scouts also laid an ambush; two miscreants were injured. In April the poppy fields were destroyed in Dogra and Jhansi area. In May a joint operation with police was carried out and houses were destroyed in Jhansi first half of year was spent in area domination by patrolling and carrying out sting operation. In June an IED blast injured five scouts of Mahsud. Miscreants had little to retaliate, IEDs were blasted but luckily they did not cause much damage. Another factor was an improved equipment, initially Mahsud Scouts did not have any detector but now bomb disposal parties were well armed with latest technology and it made a visible difference.

Janjua Wall

Colonel Naseer Janjua was the commandant of Mahsud Scout 2009-2011, a veteran cavalry officer who has commanded a wing in Tochi Scouts before being promoted. He had taken part in Kurram and more importantly in Swat; an officer who has been leading the scouts from front. It was Colonel Janjua who undertook the gigantic task of erecting a boundary wall around the Fort Salop which in true sense gives the feeling of fort and has enhanced the area and security of the Mahsud scouts to a level which is unprecedented since 1930 when the Fort Salop was constructed.

The length of wall is 8125 feet having a width varying between 18 inches to 27 inches, its height at point is around twenty feet although at points it is twelve feet. Piquets numbering a dozen have been constructed at cardinal points all along the wall and covers all around. These piquets have sleeping area and washrooms adjacent. The piquets itself are spacious having size of 14 feet by 14 feet with an width of 27 feet. It is pucca brick wall , no less than 2.7 million bricks were used, these bricks were brought from Peshawar and daily almost four to six truck loads of brick was brought to fort. Fort Salop has serious shortage of water thus the construction of wall is commendable. 11700 cement bags were used ,21892 kilograms of T-iron has been incorporated in the wall to give it strength. 27 civilian masons were employed for the construction , the project

started in January 2010 and was completed by January next year. Major Muhammad Amir was the project officer, Major Shoaib was the quarter master of the scouts and as such directly supervising the wall, Subedar {later Subedar Major} Abdul Waheed Bangash was the project JCO and Naik Azmat Bangash was the project NCO, Corps Subedar major Khalid Usman Khattak was another pivotal figure. Above all it was the driving force and personality of the Colonel Janjua which made all this possible. There were many stages in the construction which needs elaboration. The wall runs along the bed of the stream and during the flash floods of 2011 a portion of wall suddenly collapsed. Battalion Havildar Major Havildar Akbar Mahsud recalls ‘ there were six or seven scouts working at the time and i rushed to the spot, although all were safe yet i was not mentally at peace and it was only after carrying out a physical count of the scouts in the fort did i had a sigh of relief’. Now the wall has been altered in a way to let the water pas by.

This was the first major construction work undertaken by the Mahsud scouts in last thirty years and the wall is testimony to the fact that the skills of Mahsuds are unmatched even today as far as the construction is concerned, let it not be forgotten that it was the construction for which Mahsud battalions were raised. It was a time of great achievement, the insurgency was getting off the ground in Bara Valley

and as such the wall came very handy when the full weight of military was thrust in the valley and the miscreants retaliated, wall proved to be insurmountable . Above all wall created a sense of achievement and a bondage among the Mahsud scouts. Their living for a year centred around this wall, all night work remained in progress, extra tea and edibles were prepared, officers took part with the scouts, Colonel Janjua practically breathed the wall till its completion.

In last thirteen years no other wall can match the grace, length and magnitude of this wall which was constructed under hostile environment. Today it stands a symbol of state's authority . wall cost 1,89,96,570 rupees. It was constructed by the Mahsud Scouts , no civilian labour other than the masons were employed.

October Blast. On 20th October 2010, an IEDE blast near Sur garh took the lives of Naik Altaf Khattak, Sepoy Ansar Khan Afridi and Sepoy Nawaz Orakzai, three other scouts were injured as well. In another accident which took place on 24th November at Shin Kamar another IED took the lives of three more scouts namely, Subedar Khan Alam Mahsud, Sepoy Ayub Gul Bhattani and Sepoy Ishaq Ali Turi and seven others were injured.

2011 was no different from previous years but extensive and aggressive patrolling and area domination

by the Mahsud scouts had lessen the hold of the miscreants but it was a continuous battle. Almost daily operations were carried out and suspects cbeing caught. On 3rd March 2011 in an search and cordon operation carried out by 1W, 2W, 3W and 1W Khyber Rifles in Alam Guddar for the rescue of a kidnapped khassadar , a fierce fire fight erupted resultantly six scouts all sepoy embraced shahadat and two were injured.

IEDs did altered the way of warfare in Bara Valley, Mahsud Scouts posts are well spraed in the area and they all require replenishment of ration and ammunition apart from the administration of troops which includes their leave and training. On 17th October during one such replenishment at Jhansi, Dogra, Milward, Darro Adda, the convoys were hit with sniper and rocket launchers, eight soldiers of Khyber rifles and one from Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat and four others {all from Khyber rifles} were injured. On 20th October an operation was conducted in the area Nullah, it was one of the heaviest in terms of manpower, 1W,2W,3W of mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles, company e SOG, companies of Mohmand rifles, Chitral Scouts and swat scouts took part in it. Heavy exchange of fire resulted in the shahadat of Captain Ghulam Qadir, Havildar Muhammad qasim both from SOG and Sepoy Aslat Gul of Mohmand rirles, 12 other scouts were injured including two from Mahsud Scouts.

In an operation carried out in Arjali nadi , 106 suspects were arrested out of which 100 were released and only six were detained. Houses of miscreant commanders including Sher wali, Mada Gul and Hussain were demolished. Five more houses were burnt on 12th in Meri khel area. New posts at Khoi and Daulat Khel resulted in five more houses of miscreants being demolished, one miscreant was killed in this encounter as well. Big arms cache was found in the operation carried out on the 30th December 2011 in general area Chargai Dograi, no less than 299 mortar bombs were captured from the miscreants. The Daulat Khel post was attacked by the miscreants on 2nd February 2012 and four scouts of Swat Scouts were injured whereas Lance Naik Iftikhar Mohmand embraced shahadat.

2012- Maira Sar

Maira Sar is the highest peak in the area overlooking the Fort Salop and Shin Kamar Pass. 23 Baluch and 35 Azad Kashmir Regiments, 2W, 3W of Mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles and two companies of SOG were part of the force. Tactical headquarters was established at Shin Kamar. On 16th February 2012 aerial pounding was done in which Cobras and airforce jets took part followed by artillery fire, a troop of tank was also placed at Shin Kamar. It was a two prong advance with 8 AK regiment supporting the Lawata prong. Another feature of this operation was the induction of

village defence committee{VDC} which comprised of loyal tribes, these are mainly broken away factions who are good in holding their own area by virtue of their knowledge of the area. On 17th maira sar was captured, sepoy ahmed Shah of Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat alongwith two other scouts belonging to SOG and four persons of aman lashkar and three wee injured. An IED blast in one of the 23 baluch bunker on 18th took the lives of five soldies.

In another related incident, Sniper fire on Nullah post resulted in an injury to Naik Amir Muhammad Bangash of Mahsud scouts, later a heavy contingent was sent to evacuate the injured soldiers, during the move back the QRF itself came under attack , three soldiers of 23 Baluch laid their lives while three other including two from Mahsud scouts were injured. The deadliest attack came on 2nd March 2012 at Maira sar when ten soldiers of 23 Baluch embraced shahadat and eight other were injured.

Alam Guddar was another hot spot where a operation was conducted on 10th March, 39 miscreants were killed while three own soldiers including an officer of 17 FF embraced shahadat and ten other wee injured including one from Mahsud scouts. Houses of suspected miscreant commanders including Maulvi faqir and Wazeer were demolished on 20th march 2012 and 125 suspects were arrested. Rasool jan Markaz was cordoned

in the early hours of 22nd April by 2W{MS}, 3W KR, 17FF and 35 AK regiments in Aziz market area, markaz was demolished and five miscreants were killed .

June 2012

1Wing QRF was on patrol under command Capatin Manna Ul Hassan, as they reached near the Al haj market an IED blasted which rip through the vehicle, Captain Manan , Naik tariq Mohmand, Lance naik Kamran Bangash, Lance naik Yousaf Bhittani, sepoy Bahadur shah Mohmand, Ali Badshah afridi, Khan Afzal Bangash and lance naik Nawaz Gul Bangash of Khattak scouts all embraced shahadat while three othyer scouts were injured who were immediately evacuated to Peshawar. Captain Manan was a cheerful officer , his father always calls at Fort salop when ever any accident is reported in media and prays for the safety of all.

Lashkar Islam was mostly busy in hit and run operations, they would use a pick up , park it at some place, sprinkle the place with water brought in a bucket , place the mortar and fire few rounds, by the time their location is ascertained with the help of radars they simply move and flee into the thick growth. In one such arid carried out on Jhansi Fort on 18th august 2012, sepoy Mohammad Khateeb Mahsud embraced shahadat. Miscreants fired 15 rockets out of which ten landed

inside the fort, five scouts wounded which were taken to the Peshawar.

Evacuation of wounded by itself is an operation, on one hand is the early and speedy evacuation of the injured scout which directly affects the morale, on the other hand is the hard reality of endangering more scouts in the rescue operations. An elaborate decision has to be taken in time judging all the angles. Culturally the scouts does not care much about their own lives when it comes to the rescue of fellow scouts but at times commander had to wait for an hour to carry out the rescue operation.

December 2012. A constant and continuous skirmishes continued between the mahsud scouts and miscreants, they resorted to sniper firing and Mahsud scouts carried out sting operations on suspected localities mostly on intelligence tips. Checking the movement of people in the area, domination of the valley and imposing the writ of state. IEDs remained the biggest threat in the area. In an incident on 9th December 2012 one such blast took the life of Sepoy Muhammad Hasim Youasfzai of 5Wing swat scouts.

Ghundai Post, 12th December 2012

Perhaps the most devastating incident of the last few years when the post was attacked by the miscreants and were able to over run it and get away with a sizeable quantity of weapons, ammuniton, artion and other items.

It all started on 12th December at 1745 hours when the post came under fire attack, initially mortars were fired by the miscreants which all fell short of it. Miscreants were engaged with artillery in eastern direction towards Mufti Madrassah. A heavy lashkar was reported by the post commander at 1818 at the base of the post. By 1830 hours the base bunkers of the post had been captured by the miscreants. Reinforcement was sent but by 1855 hours Post Commander Subedar Wali Khan reported the situation to be out of hand due to overwhelming numbers of miscreants, at 1905 hours he informed about vacating the post along with 15 other scouts by 1910 it was all over post was in the hand of miscreants. The scouts after vacating the post had gathered at Kohi Post. A counter attack was being planned and troops were being moved and they established positions by 2230 hours. They moved forward and reached the top by 0230 hours; it was taken back. Sniper continued on the post and it resulted in the shahadat of a sepoy Jahangir Khan Afridi on 17th December while another Afridi scout was injured. Nullah Post was another hard hit post mostly by sniper fire.

2013

There was heavy fog in January which made the operations bit difficult especially due to keeping direction. Arjali nadi came under attack in mid January which was beaten back, however Naik Hussain Ahmed

Mohmand and Sepoy Aminullah Khattak of mahsud Scouts lost their lives along with two soldiers of 71 Punjab Regiment , eight soldiers were injured all from Mahsud Scouts.

In January 2013 command was changed and handed over to Colonel Naeem Sarwar who was already commanding the Khatak Scouts, a gunner officer who have been battalion commander in Pakistan Military Academy. Sting operations wre carried out as in past, however one mark change at present is the efforts of commandant to bring back the normalcy in the bara Valley. It is being achieved with aggressive verbal and physical bouts with the miscreants and simulatanosuly an effort is undrerway to win the heart and ionds of local population. Polio drop campaign resulted in over 18000 children being given the vaccination. On first two days 10th & 11th June it was carried out in Bar Kambar Khel and on 12th in Sepah area which is heart land of Mangal bagh, til 1200 hours not a single family came however commandant's message to Faqir Wali in the area changed the scenario. Most significant is the opening of Bara Canal. Reconaissance with irrigation department was carried out on 113th june, commandant himself went to see the spera Dam, on the way abck he adopted the Kuhi route which was closed since 2010. This small step will go a long way in establishing the writ of government and finishing no go areas in the agency.

Operation Sheraz was a 24-30 hours operation conducted from evening 9th February to mid night 10th February. A total of eight companies were employed (2x Companies ex 71 Punjab, AK Light Commando, company ex 35 AK, SOG-1, SOG-4 and two pooled companies ex MS / Swat Scout / Khyber Rifles / ISCR troops) during the operation. Aim was to Philologically dent miscreants through a targeted operation with deception, initially and thereafter. Later
 sanitize area from Gandao to Spera Dam (Western side) and Fort Jhansi- Spera Dam (Eastern Side).

On 24th February 2013 during “Operation Sheraz-2” . 1Wing was deployed in cordon near Nalla Post, during the operation Company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion reported that there is shortage of ammunition with them and asked for immediate supply. Number 701790 **Havildar Shahid Ali Bangash** deployed in cordon near Nalla Post with Quick Reaction Force 1Wing, immediately loaded the ammunition in Armed Personnel Carrier vehicle and under heavy fire voluntarily rushed towards the site along with driver Number 704248 Sepoy Hanif Shah. On reaching the spot he realized that the combat group which had to take the ammunition for company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion did not reach the RV. He was out of communication with his Wing Commander so he

rushed back for further orders. He was again sent back to the same RV, which he again did and successfully handed over the required ammunition to the company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion. His unprecedented display of courage, valour, dedication and selfless attitude assisted the company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion to engage the terrorists causing considerable damage both in terms of men and material.

Present. At present there is cessation of violence in the valley, an operation in undergoing to capture the heights of Tirah and maidan which were successfully accomplished on 9th June 2013. Bara Bazar once bustling with life gives the look of a ghost town, deserted and awful silence occasionally broken by jet aircraft flying over head.

Mahsud Scouts Dance Party

Dance is a rhythmic representation of the culture, in pathan tribal culture dance is by itself a manifesto of militancy; yet none matches the ferocity and utter frivolity of soul carrying daggers and whirling around shaking their heads in accordance with the drum beats. Commissioner Karachi was witness and guest at one

such event arranged in his honour in 1966 and he rewarded with Rupees two hundred to them. They have performed at President's House , at annual Horse and cattle show at Lahore and regular performers at Landi Kotal Khyber Rifles. Strength of party at Lahore would be over fifty headed by a junior commissioned officer. Band party of Mahsud Scouts was equally popular at all events. Bugler used to carry out the retreat and reveille. In August 1994 Khakroob Mamid Khan Mahsud died at Khyber Rifles Landi Kotal while carrying out rehearsal for the dance; he was member of dance party.